

HISTORY OF THE USERS OF PERFINS

BURROUGHS, WELLCOME & CO., DARTFORD, KENT By Arthur Smith.

Two American pharmacists, Silas M Burroughs and Henry S Wellcome, entrepreneurs with initiative and immense energy, entered into partnership in 1880 and commenced trading as Burroughs, Wellcome & Co. Their first factory was established at Wandsworth, London in 1884. The expansion of the Company was so rapid that within a few years the partners found it necessary to establish a large manufacturing centre. The site of the former Phoenix Paper Mills in Dartford was obtained and opened as the Wellcome Chemical Works in July 1889. In subsequent years experimental and separate chemical departments were created and close links with the Borough of Dartford were established when Silas M Burroughs donated money towards building a hospital. Today, the Silas Ward in the Livingstone Hospital at Dartford bears a plaque in his memory.

A wide range of compressed products, including medicines and photographic chemicals, were produced bearing the distinctive unicorn trade mark and sold under a variety of branch names, the most important being "Tabloid".

Some of the early products of the Chemical Works were extracted from plants imported from abroad. Then in 1904 a special farm was created on site and a variety of crops were grown, including deadly-nightshade, foxglove, henbane and thornapple. From these plants were obtained many medicines which became known throughout the world.

The provision of cases of essential medicines, mainly of the "Tabloid" brand, was envisaged by Henry Wellcome to boost the Company products. "Tabloid" chests were made and one was presented to the then Prime Minister, William Gladstone. Another went to the Houses of Parliament and from 1908 each patrol man of the Automobile Association carried a "Tabloid" first aid kit. A special miniature chest was made for Her Majesty Queen Mary's dolls house in 1924.

From the 1950's many important products were introduced which began to transform the fortunes of the Company. These were in relation to migraine, hookworm in humans, malaria and ointments to treat burns, wounds and skin infections. In the 1980's important contributions were made in the field of anti-viral chemotherapy and in 1987 the first anti-viral product licensed for the treatment of Aids became available.

In the field of exploration it is interesting to note that famous pioneers and explorers were provided with well designed medicine chests which were carried through the jungles of equatorial Africa, Asia and South America, as well as expeditions to both North and South Poles. Captain Scott's medical kit was

recovered from his tent in 1912 after his ill-fated expedition had perished. Medical kits carried by astronauts include Wellcome medical products and "Marzine", an anti-travel sickness product, was carried by members of the Apollo space team in 1975.

The Burroughs, Wellcome & Co of Dartford used two perfin with confirmed identification:

1) Cat.B7700.01 BW/&Co 13,14/12,8,6 4/4½mm (III); (Fig.1)

2) Cat.B7705.01 BW/&Co. 14,15/14,8,6 4½mm (I) (Fig.2)

There are quite a number of perfins associated with the Company but are mainly for the London establishment in Euston Road, London, which holds the Company archives. The Dartford Company is that of production and research work. One perfin was used by the Wellcome Foundation Ltd which was no doubt used in the Dartford Company.

Members may find they can add to the above by checking holdings of stamps and particularly identified covers. Some of these may be identifications of the other permutations of BW/&Co which are not yet recorded in Tomkins. If you do find any identified covers, please give the Catalogue number from the Illustrated Catalogue if possible. If not, a tracing will suffice.

B7705.01 is found without a stop under the "o" (Fig.3) and without an extra hole in the leg of the "&" (Fig.4). Roy thinks they are the same die, perhaps a multi head, so the more information and photocopies available the better. If postmarks are legible please give details (Fig. 5).

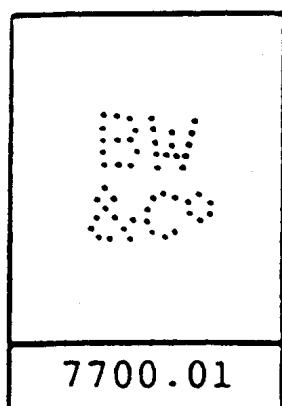


Fig.1

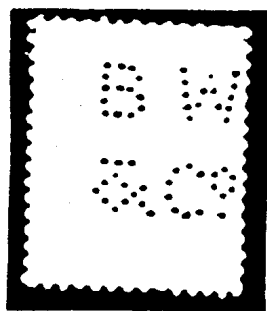


Fig.2

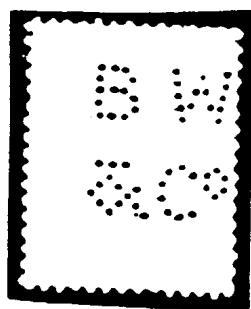


Fig.3

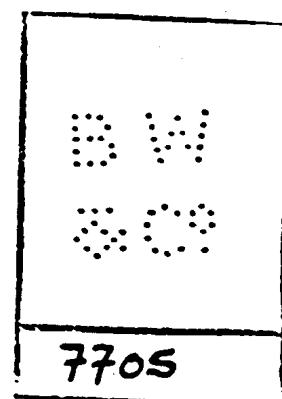


Fig.4



Fig.5

